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ABSTRACT

Collaborative efforts between vocational education, the military services, and defense-related industries have been reviewed to meet the defense preparedness needs of the Nation. The U.S. Department of Education has responded to these needs by establishing the Defense Preparedness Task Force, convening a Defense Preparedness Review Group, and conducting the Vocational Education and Defense Preparedness Seminar. The Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education has proposed the following Federal initiatives: identifying the need for defense-related training, fostering training performance that yields increased productivity, disseminating the best research and demonstration products relating to defense preparedness, improving data management for information dissemination, and encouraging information sharing with school personnel. Many military training needs are similar to those provided by vocational education in the civilian sector. The partnership that the Department of Defense has maintained with the civilian educational community in providing education for the nation's youth can be broadened in the area of vocational and technical education. Vocational educators need to continue to monitor state and national defense-related training developments and to share models of training. Such efforts will assist them in developing stronger collaborative arrangements with defense-related industries. (YLB)

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OVERVIEW

ERIC® DIGEST NO.39

Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND DEFENSE PREPAREDNESS

The Nation's security is dependent on the technical competencies of personnel in the Armed Forces and defense-related industries. The new thrust to increase defense preparedness, concommitant with the technological revolution, has expanded the responsibilities of the providers of technical training. Collaborative efforts between vocational education, the military services, and defense-related industries have been renewed to meet the defense preparedness needs of the Nation.

National Leadership for Defense Preparedness

The U.S. Department of Education has responded to these needs as follows:

- Establishing the Defense Preparedness Task Force in October 1981
- Convening a Defense Preparedness Review Group representing industry, public and proprietary postsecondary institutions, State educational agencies, trade associations, and training specialists from the private sector on September 20, 1982
- Conducting the Vocational Education and Defense Preparedness Seminar in September 1982
- Replicating the above seminar at the American Vocational Association convention in December 1983
- Conducting a regional Defense Preparedness Seminar by the Philadelphia Regional Office of the Department of Education on March 18, 1983
- Sponsoring a supplemental study at the National Center for Research in Vocational Education featuring two National study tours of defense preparedness sites (Krause and Parker 1984)

The Vocational Education and Defense Preparedness Seminar, conducted in 1982 under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of Education with the cooperation of the American Vocational Association, had these major goals: to identify currently operational vocational education programs supporting defense preparedness, to describe the programs' origins and discuss means of replicating them, and to identify resource personnel who could provide assistance in developing similar programs.

The establishment of a permanent task force was proposed at the National seminar. This task force would assist the Department of Education in furthering the mission of the Department of Defense in such areas as basic and vocational education through regional, State, and local educational agencies. Another function of the task force would be to draft an interagency agreement to promote further activities, programs, and projects on a regular basis (Bell 1982).

The Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education (Worthington 1982), proposed the following Federal initiatives:

- Identify the need for defense-related training for occupations requiring training of 1 year or longer
- Foster training performance that yields increased productivity
- Disseminate the best products of research and demonstration relating to defense preparedness
- Improve data management to keep personnel informed of needs, trends, and developments in skilled shortage areas
- Encourage greater use and sharing of information with school personnel relating to skilled trade shortages to increase student recruitment in those areas
- Complete National assessment of this comprehensive issue
- Encourage the replication of these defense-related seminars

He further suggested that actions to be taken by State and local agencies might include the following:

- Work with key public and private officials to foster development of industrial potential and technology
- Meet with State economic development agencies to make certain they are updated on vocational achievements and capabilities
- Conduct defense preparedness seminars similar to the National model, at the state level or on a regional basis
- Consult with industry and military installation representatives in designing new training programs for emerging needs
- Distribute information to industry concerning capabilities for training
- Ascertain whether or not existing job vacancies in defense industries could be addressed in new training programs
- Create information networks for practitioners on defense preparedness topics
- Increase utilization of defense contract and military personnel as a means for improving instructional programs

Compatibility of Military and Vocational Education

While our armed services conduct much of their own training, they do contract for a substantial amount of training

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from business, industry, and educational institutions. Some training is specific to the military, such as artillery equipment maintenance; however, many military training needs are similar to those provided by vocational education in the civilian sector (Boerrigter 1983). This is substantiated by the fact that the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, under an agreement between the U.S. Departments of Defense and Education, has been involved since 1975 in a project that identifies, acquires, selects, and disseminates military-developed technical training materials applicable for use in civilian vocational and technical education programs. Many of the curriculum materials have direct applicability to the civilian sector (Chase 1980).

In today's high-technology environment, increased emphasis is being placed on the training of reservists. Communication and cooperation between Reserve unit commanders and nearby vocational training institutions can help build understanding of mutual needs and requirements and provide convenient, quality training opportunities (Morrow 1983).

Military Training Needs

The U.S. Department of Defense has maintained a partnership with the civilian educational community in providing education for the Nation's youth. This partnership can be broadened in the area of vocational and technical education. Military training needs exist on a large scale, with over 2 million personnel in the active Armed Forces and over 350,000 more recruited per year. In addition, over 90,000 reservists and National Guard enlist each year. Therefore, about 124,000 are in specialized skill training at any given time, requiring 47,000 military and 7,000 civilian employees to conduct training at 80 locations. Specialized skill training, the military term for vocational education, is actually broader than vocational education in that it includes training in combat skills that do not have a civilian counterpart. Specialized skill training has two parts, initial training and progression training. Initial training develops apprentices who can go to units and complete training on the job. Progression training is given to career military personnel and is designed to upgrade skills or prepare personnel for supervisory positions (Tucker 1982).

Vocational Education and Defense-related Industries

The opportunities for collaborative efforts between institutions delivering vocational education and defense industries are unlimited. The vocational-technical training capacity of this Nation can be used for specialized training for active military personnel, Reserve forces, and civilian employees. Vocational and technical education represents an existing capacity that is already responsive to specific training needed by defense-related industries, but needs to be expanded (Bottoms 1982).

A recent study conducted at the National Center for Research in Vocational Education (Starr 1984) indicates that there is still a need to promote the collaboration of vocational education and defense-related industries. This study indicates that only a few State vocational education agencies support either customized training or regular institutional programs specifically to meet the needs of firms doing defense work. There appears to be an absence of information to help key staff in State vocational agencies understand the need for preparing or upgrading skilled workers for their State's defense industrial base. Only a few State vocational education agencies participating in the study have information about the size or diversity of their State's defense industrial base and others have no idea how to get such information. The Congress and the U.S. Departments of Defense and Education have suggested that the defense industrial base is ailing and that the public vocational education systems and firms within the defense industrial base should be closely collaborating to ensure the availability of skill training.

Vocational educators need to continue to monitor State and National defense-related training developments and to share models of training. Such efforts will assist them in developing stronger collaborative arrangements with defense-related industries.

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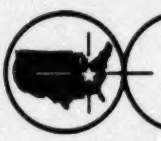

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